

PhD Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines the orality of two novels: *Carpentaria* by Australian author Alexis Wright and *A Journey to Steppe Mongolia* (《行走天涯》 in Chinese translation) by Inner Mongolian author Uljiburin (乌力吉布林). Orality for the purposes of this research refers to the representation of speech and forms of oral tradition in literary texts. As literary works, the two books are written, rather than oral, but the authors are committed in different ways to using literary craft to create effects of orality. I argue that this validates my focus on orality to critically read the two works. With this approach, I investigate the various oral elements that the two authors draw on, separately, with Chapters 2 and 3 dedicated to *Carpentaria*, with an analysis of how Aboriginal ways of speaking are reproduced in it for Chapter 2, and of how the mnemonic device of “songline” is performed in it for Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to *Steppe Mongolia*, with an investigation of the reproduction of shamanic oral tradition in Chapter 4 and of Mongolian epic singing tradition in Chapter 5. Subsequently, these devices of orality are selectively compared in Chapter 6, with the aim of shedding light on the literary strategies that are used to reinsert oral tradition in these two literary texts.

Another basis of comparison for these two works, which situates the discussion of orality in this research, is that they are both created in another, major language, which is conventional English for *Carpentaria* and standard Chinese for *Steppe Mongolia*. Hence, the ways orality is re-created in a written medium are explored in tandem with how orality simultaneously challenges the written language. The investigation of this issue is particularly conducted through the perspective of translation of language, mainly in Chapter 6, which considers the two authors’ respective strategies of writing orality to show how their ancestral spoken languages are translated into written literature as they write their novels. Lastly, this thesis also analyses some of the elements of orality that are translated into another language in Chapter 7: the published Chinese translation of *Carpentaria* by Li Yao and the

English translation of Uljiburin's Chinese work by the author of this thesis, rendered as *A Journey to Steppe Mongolia*. Through an investigation into how orality is created in the two literary works and how their orality is recreated in translation, this research endeavours to provide insights for critical scholarship on orality as it transfers from one language and literature to another.